9/14/71

Dear Sylvia,

There are many kindnesses in your letter of the 11th. Because I have had an interrupted morning and there is no time to resume work on PM before lunch, I make immediate response. And I thank you for the thoughtfulness of sending labels, which reflects part of the reality of my life - that I need and can use them.

I read your letter seven 1 hours ago and will reread it before I conclude.

First of all, and not alone because you also are so busy, I cannot really ask you to edit the two existing parts of the book. Two other reasons are you can't do it in time (and this I will explain)and with so little time, it would make impossible any work on the case you might want to do.

There has been an unreality in your attitude that I argued but once with you, for we neither have time for futilities. Literary quality or its lack are not what controls what can be published on this subject. I went through this more than you will ever be able to appreciate with WHITEWASH, where I did, by the way, begin with just the collaboration you suggest and wound up writing the whole damned thing myself in four weeks to meet a 2/15/65 contract deadline. I then made some friendships that still continue to reward me in monor ways. When that bastard of a since-bankrupt publisher broke the contract while still drolling in the till -for he claimed advance orders for 25,000 copies in hardback and acknowledged that he had been spoken to by Washington - I got a private, professional editor to read the draft. What she told me experience has since authenticated, that unless one begins with a publisher whose desiresare known and lucidly expressed, there is no such thing as editing that can suit all publishers.

This, of course, does not address fundamental defects, and these defects do exist in my drafts. They are inevitable because of my character and because of the role in which I have cast myself and the conditions of my life, which none of the criticis can begin to conceive. It is also a by-product of the magnitude of what I have undertaken. Here again, I think you really have no concept of it. You know, it has not been possible for you to get here since my first invitation, which I thing was before the end of the winter of 1965, in early 1966. I have given Howard, for example, a minor Pentagon Papers I had researched, two large boxes of it, and there is more I have yet to find to give him. The typed research for a book I laid aside after I saw and understood the doctrine of the Epstein and Lane writing is four or five times book length. I did most of a book on Manchester and when there was a profitable offer on it, laid it aside (forever, except as part of an archive for the future) to finish OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS as a kind of insurance against what I knew any prosecutor could do-before I met Garrison. I have, as a matter of fact, completed books of which few know and almost none have seen, books intneded for possible defensive needs that, at the time I wrote them, were realy possible needs. I spent much more time than it takes me to write a book trying to protect us against the potential disaster of the first John Nichols suit, at Bud's request, because he understood the legal potential as I could not but I understood enough about the rest to have the same concern. I did more writing for my suit to get access to the pictures of the clothing that the usual book requires. And here I am referring to but the number of words, not the work behind them. I don't think you can begin to comprehend the work that is represented in FAKE-UP, the work that could not be included in it. Or the amount I have done since then for the day this case may get before a federal court or, hopefully, a jury. I have much more than I can possibly use in ALIAS OSWALD, the writing of which is begun. Long before Lifton reprinted the executive sessions, and when people like Paul were calling them the kaffee-klatch of the old biddies, I had written a long analysis of them and half of a book on them. The record I have made with the Archives is enormous. I think it will have importance and has already had beneficial results. The time I took with the Secret Service is much more time than it takes to write a book. I have spent so much time trying to keep the various committees, like in LA and San Diego straight. And the extent and cost of my labors in New Orleans, which I fear you will never permit yourself to try and understand (although you may want

to consider that the first thing I did there was to get Garrison to agree for you to be his devil's advocate), are beyond measure. The least is the amount it added to my indebtedness. The physical and emotional toll was greater than anything in my 58 years. Disaster that this was, it was nothing to what it could have been, what I was able to prevent. And to this day, there is almost nobody I do not help. When PH, for example, sends me a few of the CDs he gets, I stop everything or, as soon as I can find time to read them, I abandon everything else, and send him notes based on my own knowledge and work. When I was combing the Archives, I took time and spent money I do not have to make duplicate repositories of everything. If I were to take time off and merely catalogue my tapes, that, too, would require more time than I have taken to write any book. I now have a backlog or perhaps 3,000 pages of Archives material to <u>read</u> - material I have bought. And I've laid the foundation for as many as more than a dozen suits to bring out suppression and suppressed evidence. One of the consequences of this work is that I have established kinds of confidential relationships with "the other side" that have been rewarding-and productive. I have in my possession the most significant evidence of official nature that was denied the Commission. In time, in context, you will see it. You may recall that when it is first happened I invited you down to study some of it, and that was years ago, years that now seem so much longer to me than they were. In strictest confidence, Henry Wade will take to court any case I take to him. I think, in time, it will be possible, and despite his performance under that great emotional utmoil of the assassination, he will be no Garrison. He is a good lawyer and, a rarity for Dallas, he was pro-JFK. He has done investihations for me. I could go on and on, but it is not my purpose to boast but to let you undertsand another than the purist literary appriach to what is essentially a non-literary problem.

Here I am, after all these painful and desparate years of extreme poverty, aging, exhausted, trying to get a decent night's sleep once in a while, and yet during the past week alone those nights were sometimes no longer than two hours, averaged, save for one, not even five. One night I just fell apart, fell asleep in a chair after supper, and then staggered into bed. That night, for the first time in years, I got what is for most people a single night of sleep, a normal night.

I do not delude myself into believing this promotes longevity.

Nor do I kid myself into believing that the best way to write is with no outline, or that a rough draft is the ideal literary vehicle.

Aside from all the other very serious problems of our lives of which you have no glimmer, all the other things with which I have to contend that no critic really knows and of which few have even a hint, every single time I do anything, subconsciously I ask myself if I ought not be doing another thing. Every single thing I do is at the expense of something I do not do. Natrually, to a degree, this is true of everyone, but I am here referring <u>only</u> to work on the case. And, unfortunately, I have forgotten more than most people know about the case simply because I am into so much of it.

I seek no plaudits, but I am alone in havinf devoted my entire life to it since the assassination, and this includes laying aside two books one of which had every promise of making a profitable movie. And I do this with an intensity no youth you have ever seen can today equal. When I was already weary and on the road, making appearance, I wore out shifts of kids in the various cities to which I went-and that was what now seems so long ago.

With all of this I have the urgencies of life to meet. Right now I am behind in my taxes, and every year, with no income, to merely service my debt I have to find $2,000. With no income, yet. Can you imagine how I feel when I think of what this has done to my wife?

In all areas it has made of me something I never was, a patient man. What one area is getting my knowledge on paper. It does no good in my head.

I have had, from time to time, when I felt I had to avoid the fact of the case, long discussions (by mail) with a number of exoerts, ranging from a professor of literature

at a major university to the editor of a poetry journal, on my writing. This editor said he had never seen as thorough and dispassionate an appraisal of his own work by any writer.

So, I think I can fairly say it is not because I am unaware of these deficiencies. It is, rather, because, rightly or wrongly, I have decided that something else is more important. But I have made efforts to overcome them. For example, when our relationship was better, and despite the evil thing he did to me very early, I asked Vince if he could (as his own wealth easily permits) arrange for me to have a young college graduate as an editor-in-reside for whom I, with all my debts, would probide the necessities of life when I am hard put to provide my own. Three or four years ago I had that much researched and, I think, ready to write. I have tried. I also tried foundations. The help is not available. People are long on talk, short on performance. And I do not go around asking personal help. Except when it is not for me but for the work, when I do sometimes seek the small sums I do not have.

Maggie, for example, begged me to go out to California in December 1966 and get Liebeler off of Lane's (meaning everybody's) back. She and Bill begged me, several times, earlier. I abandoned WWII and did this. Liebeler then fled, but he did fall silent in fleeing until Garrison raised his head. And then I went out again, and if it was my worst performance of very many, and if it came when I was exhausted and had worked around the clock, he has been silent since then. With all her wealth, all Maggie came up with is a glass of Scotch and a ham sandwich onlimpid bread. I am still in debt for what that cost. What it did to the abandoned book you can imagine. What it did to my wife, who alone had to wrap and mail copies, you can't imagine. She worse out every pair of gloves she had and her hands were torn for a month thereafter. You know part of the thanks I got from Lane, and you well know what Maggie could have afforded. The fact is that rather than their helping me, I gave them about 100 copies of the books, free, for them to use. And the LA committee later returned some for credit! Bill is the only exception to the rule of which, without stopping to think, comes to mind, that no person of our years has ever arranged a single appearance for me. It has all been the kids, except that Hal Verb is in between in age, and he was great. In fact, when I needed a place to sleep in LA, Maggie didn't offer it. That time I slept on the couch of a young divorcee who risked her reputation when she learned, late at night, that I had no place to stay.

Because I was from the first aware of the problem you raise, I asked Maggie and Bill, when were then after me to go out there and help them, to read the ms of WWII. They ultimately sent it back with nothing but raves-not even the correction of typos!

So, I face a futility. Except that MR did come down and go over the draft of the final part of PM, Moch has read and made valuable suggestions about part of what were necessarily eliminated from FAME-UP, as did Bernabei. It has been a long, long time since I asked several people who had copies of the two parts of PM to make specific suggestions. I have a few notes and they are filed for when I can do that myself, something I expected to be well into by now. People talk and criticize, but they do not do. All, of course, have their own problems, their own lives. But this does not relieve mine.

I abominate sending out unread letters, for among other things, I know how terrible my typing is. Yet I do it because that would take time I can otherwise spend on work. With each thing I do or do not do, this is the decision I must make. I have so many started things that should be completed, you can't begin to imagine how many.

Long ago, perhaps when Dell reprinted WW without changing even a comma, I came to believe that the question on this sybject has nothing to do with conformity with normal literary standards. Through the years I have had thousands of letters from the unlettered, and they fortify my belief. I still get them, almost daily. And the most important thing, I believe, is trying to make the information available, regardless of literary perfection or defect. I simply will not spend hours crossing ts and dotting is. I'll

produce something with that time.

This letter, for example, cost me the walk I have been trying to take every day and the short relaxing dip I take in our pool before lunch, to which my wife will momentarily call me.

No personal affront is intended, but when you speak of a collaborator like Cook you illustate how little you have been able to keep up with things-and people. I doubt if you can begin to understand how unlike the rest of his fine career he is on this subject. Or, if you have seen it, how little you can understand of his Nation piece. Strange things happen to all of us (I don't exempt myself) on a subject like this, with all the problems, all the power of the opposition to it. Egos get involved as would otherwise be impossible for those people, and Cook is a conspicuous example. I'm surprised you do not know or if you knew recall the antecedents of his 1966 crap in the nation. But this current thing is an incredible sycophancy as it is a dishonesty.

I promised I'd reread your letter, but I'll not have time. I apologise for this. My wife will soon be calling me to lunch, and after that I'll have to get onto other work. I am acutely aware of the limitations of mortality as I am of the inevitable consequences of the abuse I have heaped upon myself for years to attempt what I have attempted. I am determined to accomplish as much of it as may be possible, with those compromises and costs that are inevitable. There is another limitation on mortality that is not a function of abuse or aging, and of this I have often enough been made aware. I have enemies, I present hazards, to those with a willigness to seek what for them is a solution that none of us has.

But before Lil calls me, there is another aspect of this you should consider. If commercial publication is possible with any of this work, those things you address are automatically compensated for in publication. Every house edits. It is one of their calculated costs. Some of the things that some of my friends dislike in my work are the identical things for which I have received editorial commendations. While it is not, of course, true in all cases (as with clarity), by and large what you are talking about is like beauty, in the mind as beauty is in the eye. The worse tragdy is that, as with Frank*UP, the editing is that of which I have had most, if not all complaints.

Do not feel it is incumbent upon you to respond. I didn't have enough time for other work, you raise serious, responsible, well-intended points that to a degree I felt I should answer. In the last analysis it is I who must decide how to spend my time, and long ago I made that decision. I have sought help. From some, unlike you, it was available and was not offered or provided. You know how short a time it has been since Howard was here. But in that time my wife has retyped a third of what he read or about as much as Epstein's book represents in words - and this while she has been unwell. And had to do and has done other things. This is the pace of our declining years. Would you rather have me leave work undone?

As soon as I can cut the first part and defuse the second, identified as III, I will paste up a master of them for the unlikely event I can arrange a private printing and will then return to other writing. And suing. And research. And in between time I have other suits to attend, like our old one the government has been delaying, for the ruin of our farm by helicopters. They are supposed to have quit stalling and begin negotiating, as of last week, but they haven't. I may have to drop everything and prepare that case for trial. As I begin, there are complexities in our lives of which none are aware, and the extent of my work is also greater than anyone, even Howard, who has become quite familiar with my files, can begin to imagine.

But do not misunderstand, for I very much appreciate your offer, more because I know it represents a real sacrifice. It just isn't feasible. I won't wait that long. In fact, I haven't with this new part. Best wishes,